

Memorandum of Telephone Interview of Nevelyn E. Zachary

On the night of September 15, 1976, at approximately 8:20pm, the undersigned telephoned Mr. Nevelyn E. Zachary, former Inspector of the Memphis Police Department's Homicide Squad, at his home

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I identified myself as a Department of Justice Attorney assigned to the Attorney General's Task Force investigating the FBI's investigation of the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and stated that I wanted to ask him some questions about the part he played in the investigation. Mr. Zachary said that he would be happy to cooperate with me and related the following information.

On the afternoon of April 4, 1968, at approximately 6:00pm, he was in his office when a call came in reporting that a shooting had occurred at the Lorraine Hotel and possibly involved Dr. King. He immediately left the office and went to the Lorraine Hotel, arriving there at about 6:15pm. When he arrived, Dr. King had already been taken to the Hospital and there was a lot of confusion in the hotel courtyard. Some of the people in the courtyard claimed the police had shot Dr. King; others were discussing where the shot had come from.

Shortly thereafter, a deputy sheriff advised him that a bundle containing a rifle had been discovered on N. Main Street in front of Canipe's Amusement Co. Mr. Zachary then went to N. Main Street, arriving there at about 6:30pm. He said the bundle was wrapped in a blanket and contained the rifle and a lot of personal items. He does not know which officer discovered the bundle; however, after the name "Ghormley" was mentioned by me, he said he thought he was the one, but he could be wrong. A lot of officers were standing around the bundle when he arrived on the scene. Mr. Zachary said he had the bundle placed in his car which was guarded by an officer until he returned to his office.

Mr. Zachary stated that the bundle, except for a tee shirt and pair of shorts, was turned over to the FBI at about 9:30 or 10:00pm. The tee shirt and shorts were retained because they thought the items contained a local laundry mark. During the night and the next day local laundries were checked with negative results. The tee shirt and shorts were then turned over to the FBI. Mr. Zachary said there was a very close working relationship with the FBI during the investigation and that the local police made the Memphis laundry checks, most of the Memphis motel checks and were paired up with FBI agents in other aspects of the local investigation.

Mr. Zachary stated that he did not have any first hand knowledge of the police surveillance post in fire station no. 2, or the activities of police informers since he was in homicide and came into the case only after the shooting.

Although stating that nothing is impossible, Mr. Zachary said he believed that James Earl Ray acted alone, killing Dr. King for the purpose of gaining recognition and fame. He further believes that he financed himself by pulling robberies in Canada and elsewhere. He went on to say that he believes he saw Ray sitting in the audience in the film of Dr. King making his "I've been to the mountain top" speech at the Mason Temple on the night of April 3, 1968. Mr. Zachary said: "if it were not Ray, it was a 'dead ringer' for him." He speculated that Ray probably went to Mason Temple and tried to join up with the SCLC for the purpose of getting lost in the civil rights movement, since he was on the run. He further speculated that the group did not accept Ray and this could have caused him to kill Dr. King.

The interview was concluded at 9:00pm.

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